

RAINBOW CONNECTION

Communities of color speak out against Measure 9 by Jonathan Kipp

Six community leaders of color joined forces and formally denounced the Oregon Citizens Alliance's Measure 9 during a press conference Oct. 12 at Lutheran Inner City Ministries in Northeast Portland. Speakers addressed community members and 20 minority youths as well as members of the media.

Measure 9 seeks to prohibit public schools from encouraging, promoting or sanctioning homosexuality or bisexuality. The penalty for violators would include withholding state funding from local school districts.

Cecil Prescod, Portland New Party chair, described the consequences he fears should Measure 9 pass during November's general election. He said it would create a climate that would stigmatize children based on who they are or who people think they are. "Classrooms must be safe places for all children."

Of particular concern to Prescod is the potential for AIDS prevention efforts being eliminated from schools in the wake of Measure 9's passage. He said children and people of color are at increased risk for HIV transmission.

More than 50 percent of new HIV transmissions are occurring in people younger than 25, Prescod said. "Measure 9 will put a gag order on teachers and counselors who want to give HIV prevention info."

State Sen. Avel Gordly, D-Portland, has a 34-year-old gay son who grew up in Portland, attended Benson High School and served in the U.S.

Navy during the Persian Gulf conflict. Measure 9, she said, would make the state a dangerous place for him and for others. "It saddens me greatly that we have an OCA measure again."

Gordly said the message the measure sends to children is that it is OK to be a minority but not OK to be a homosexual. "The message is clear and devastating to our kids. It does nothing more than create a climate of hate."

Amara Perez, Sisters in Action for Power director, said her organization, which seeks to empower young minority women, has been focusing on issues of safety in schools. She said divisive initiatives like Measure 9 have negative consequences and create an atmosphere that is particularly harmful for girls.

Perez said intolerance results in increased pregnancy rates and young women entering and staying in abusive relationships. These issues divide communities, she said.

Romaine Fredricka of the Rural Organizing Project, a network of citizens committed to social justice, said the OCA thinks it can own rural Oregon. She said 45 groups throughout the state are committed to saying, "No, stop, that is not going to happen."

About 5 percent of the members are people of color, Fredricka said. She said the group is distributing 30,000 No on 9 brochures throughout rural Oregon.

Fredricka also is concerned about AIDS education. She said that HIV is being controlled in communities of color because of



From left: Amara Perez, Cecil Prescod, State Sen. Avel Gordly and Miriam Calderon unite against Measure 9

good outreach in schools and that Measure 9 would shut that down.

Genaccion, a new organization of 120 young Latino voters, broke with its internal policies to speak out against Measure 9. Co-chair Miriam Calderon said that the issue was an important and timely one, which led the group to participate in its defeat.

Genaccion, a Spanglish word, roughly translates to "generation action." The group will participate in the No on 9 postcard campaign designed to reach out to voters in minority communities.

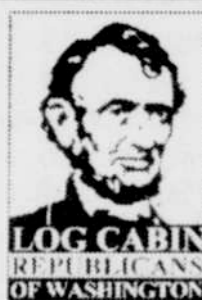
The cards, paid for and authorized by the No on 9 Campaign and Basic Rights Oregon, provide voters with a list of community leaders of color who have come out against Measure 9.

Calderon also expressed concern about new statistics recently released about suicide rates among gay and lesbian students.

Gordly admitted some might say her comments are emotional and out of place. But she said she wanted to speak to area church leaders.

Gordly thinks clergy have influence over the community. She called for pastors to speak out against Measure 9 and to help communities understand the dangers of the initiative.

"We need a quality of leader that we see at a level nationally," Gordly explained, citing the Rev. Jesse Jackson as an example. "We need to see others. We need to embrace our brothers and sisters for who they are—God's children." **JK**



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have voted to endorse the following candidates for the November 7th, 2000 General Election

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FEDERAL & STATEWIDE CANDIDATES

- **Slade Gorton, US Senate**
- Senator Gorton has repeatedly expressed his opposition to employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and has continually supported AIDS funding, notably through his co-sponsorship of the Ryan White CARE Act.
- **John Carlson, Governor**
- John Carlson will consider state employment non-discrimination legislation, supports a bill which would encourage local school districts to develop harassment policies, and supports continuation or expanded funding of AIDS/HIV research, prescription drugs and primary medical care.
- **Sam Reed, Secretary of State**
- Sam Reed served as Assistant Secretary of State for 6 years, has served five terms as Thurston County Auditor, and is a long-time supporter of equal rights for gays & lesbians. He has been endorsed by nearly every county auditor (D or R) in the state.
- **Doug Sutherland, Public Lands**
- Doug Sutherland has served as county executive, Sea-Tac City Manager, and Mayor of Tacoma during his 25+ years in office. As mayor of Tacoma, he supported adoption of their employment non-discrimination ordinance.

LEGISLATIVE CANDIDATES

- **Don Carlson, State Senate, 49th District**
- Don Carlson has been a long-time supporter of equal rights for gays & lesbians. He supports a state employment non-discrimination bill, supports encouraging local school districts to develop policies to deal with the harassment of students, and supports continued or expanded funding for HIV/AIDS care service programs.
- **John Pennington, State House, 18th District**
- John Pennington supports employment non-discrimination in government employment, supports encouraging local school districts to develop policies to deal with the harassment of students, and supports continued or expanded funding for HIV/AIDS care service programs.

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